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Re: annual progress report: DAMD17-00-1-0518 - Expression and Purification of a Potential Antidote for Organophosphate Warfare Agents

Kenneth D. Lanclos, Ph.D., Principal Investigator

Introduction:

The serine-dependent carboxylesterases (E.C. 3.1.1.1) are found in many different species (1-8), and in a variety of tissues (9-14), with high activities detected in the liver. Generally, carboxylesterases exist as 60 kDa monomers, but a few associate to form homotrimers of approximately 180 kDa (1-4). cDNA clones have been obtained by screening lambda gt11 expression libraries. Their screenings have resulted in the expression of five isoenzymes of rat liver carboxylesterase (5-9) and at least two isoenzymes from the human liver (10-12). The cDNA sequences are, generally, 1.7 to 1.9 kb in size, and they encode mature proteins that range from 507 to 568 amino acids. The different isoenzymes of liver carboxylesterases are all N-linked glycoproteins of the high mannose type (5,6,12,13). Core glycosylation of the carboxylesterases occurs in the endoplasmic reticulum lumen (14,15), and, thus it is necessary to stabilize the active conformation of the protein (6,16). Whereas, most glycosylated proteins are secretory, the carboxylesterases are localized to the luminal side of the endoplasmic reticulum, especially in humans (4-6). Very small amounts of liver carboxylesterase, however, are present in the serum (17). Carboxylesterases can hydrolyze a variety of substrates in the serum, including aliphatic and aromatic esters, and aromatic amides (18). An important function of these enzymes may be the hydrolysis, and subsequent detoxification, of pesticides, insecticides and drugs (18), many of which contain organophosphate compounds that bind covalently to the active site of the enzymes (19,20). In this regard, the carboxylesterases generally function as a high affinity-low capacity detoxification mechanism, in which organophosphates react in an irreversible 1:1 stoichiometry (17). Thus, the detoxifying ability of carboxylesterase is limited by its low concentration in serum where it encounters organophosphate compounds. A treatment for organophosphate toxicity is the administration of oximes, which reactivate inhibited acetylcholinesterase and restore cholinergic neurotransmission (17). Species with high levels of serum carboxylesterase, such as rats and mice, achieve a higher level of oxime-

induced reactivation of organophosphate-inhibited acetylcholinesterase than species with lower levels of carboxylesterase; this suggests that oximes also reactivate organophosphate-inhibited carboxylesterase (17). This recycling of organophosphate-inhibited carboxylesterase provides additional protection by making the enzyme available for further binding to organophosphates, and thus, increased detoxification.

Body:

The goals of this project are to over express a functional human liver hCaE from a recombinant cDNA in a human cell line, and isolate and purify the recombinant protein. To accomplish these goals, the cDNA encoding hCaE was altered in order to convert it to a secretory form. Expression of the site-mutated cDNA in cell culture resulted in the secretion of an active hCaE into the growth medium. Thus, the secreted hCaE enzyme will be concentrated and purified using hydrophobic interaction chromatography, Cibacron blue affinity chromatography, antibody-affinity chromatography, and finally HPLC chromatography.

The long-term objective of the project is to isolate quantities sufficient to evaluate its use for protection by enzymatic detoxification of organophosphate nerve agents in an animal model. The short-term goals of this study are to maximize the expression of a functional recombinant secretory form of human liver carboxylesterase using a steady state human cell culture system, and to isolate and purify the recombinant enzyme from the culture media.

Key Research Accomplishments:

Stable clones of 293T cells, stably transfected with the plasmid pRC/mhCaE (*figure 1*), were placed in liquid culture for expression of the secretory form of human liver carboxylesterase.

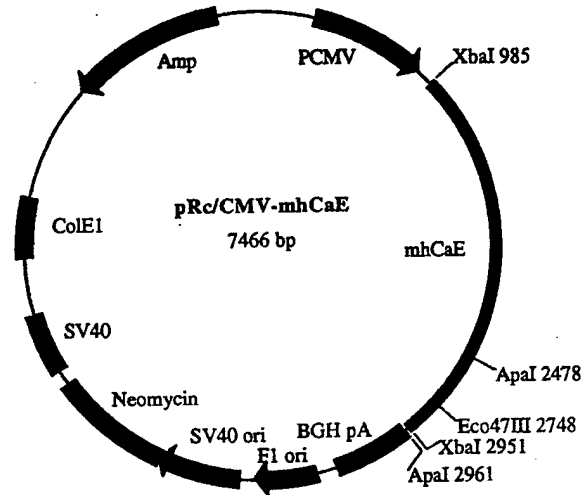


Figure 1: Expression vector containing the cDNA for secretory carboxylesterase

Carboxylesterase activity was observed to increase as early as 24 hours and to reach a maximum at day four (21). Cultured cells were separated from the media by low speed centrifugation and the pooled media from several cultures was used for the isolation of purification enzymatically active enzyme.

Carboxylesterase was precipitated from the pooled media and precipitated using 70% saturated ammonium sulfate. The precipitate from the ammonium sulfate fraction was dissolved in 20 mM Hepes, pH 7.0 and applied to an octyl Sepharose column (21) for Hydrophobic Interaction Chromatography (HIC). Previous observations had shown that HIC chromatography using octyl Sepharose, coupled with octylglucophranoside in the elution buffer resulted in an enhanced partial purification of carboxylesterase. However, the major contaminant of the preparation, bovine serum albumin, as well as several minor contaminants, were not removed by this procedure. **Figure 2, lane 4,** shows the presence of enzyme along with the bovine serum albumin and other minor contaminants from the HIC column.

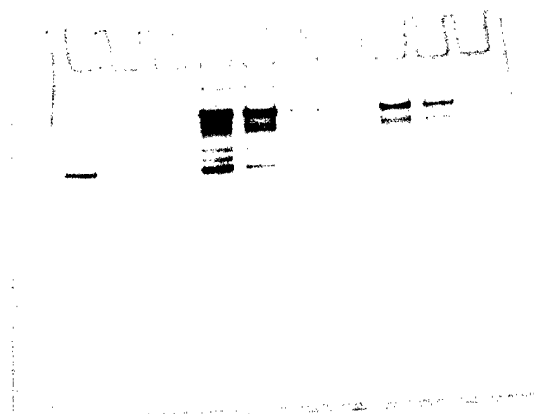


Figure 2. Nondenaturing PAGE. The lanes from left to right are lane 1; BSA standard, lane 2; urease standard, lane 3; blank, lane 4; the ammonium sulfate cut; lane 5-6; the anti-BSA IgG cut; lane 7; blank, lane 8 and 9; before and after a second treatment with anti-BSA IgG. Each lane shows a large molecular weight contaminant at the top of the gel followed by two major bands with significant carboxylesterase activity. The bottom band on the gel is BSA along with two minor bands located just above the BSA band. The gel was stained for enzyme activity using alpha naphthylacetate as substrate coupled to Fast Red TR salt. Following rinsing, the gel was stained for total protein with a 0.1% solution of Coomassie Blue R-250.

Anti-bovine serum albumin IgG was used to remove the bovine BSA during the purification procedure. The results of these experiments are seen in *figure 2*. Lane 5 shows partial removal of bovine BSA; lane 6 is a second wash of the preparation to remove any remaining carboxylesterase from the antibody. Lanes 8 and 9 show a second treatment of the enzyme sample with anti bovine serum IgG. These results show that anti-BSA will remove a majority of the contamination BSA; however, there is a considerable loss of enzyme, which probably is a result of the binding to the matrix to which the anti-BSA is attached.

Based on our previous observations (21) that carboxylesterase binds to many matrices used in standard protein purification procedures, we developed a liquid isoelectric focusing preparative system. The strategy was to first remove the bulk of the BSA (pI 4.9) from the carboxylesterase (pI 5.3) by precipitation of the BSA into the anode solution at the bottom of the column (*figure 3a*). The peak fractions containing carboxylesterase activity around pI 5.3 were collected and applied to a second column where the anode and cathode solutions were reversed. This resulted in the focusing of the BSA contaminant above the carboxylesterase fraction (*figure 3b*). Non-denaturing page gel analysis of these peak fractions from *figure 3a and b* are shown in *figures 3c and d*, respectively. The zymograms, lanes 1-3, show carboxylesterase activity while the Coomassie blue staining shows the relative amounts of enzyme and contaminating BSA protein. *Figure 3c* shows the presence of a small amount of BSA in the first isoelectric focusing fractionation while *figure 3d*, following the second focusing column, shows almost complete removal of contaminating media proteins from the preparation.

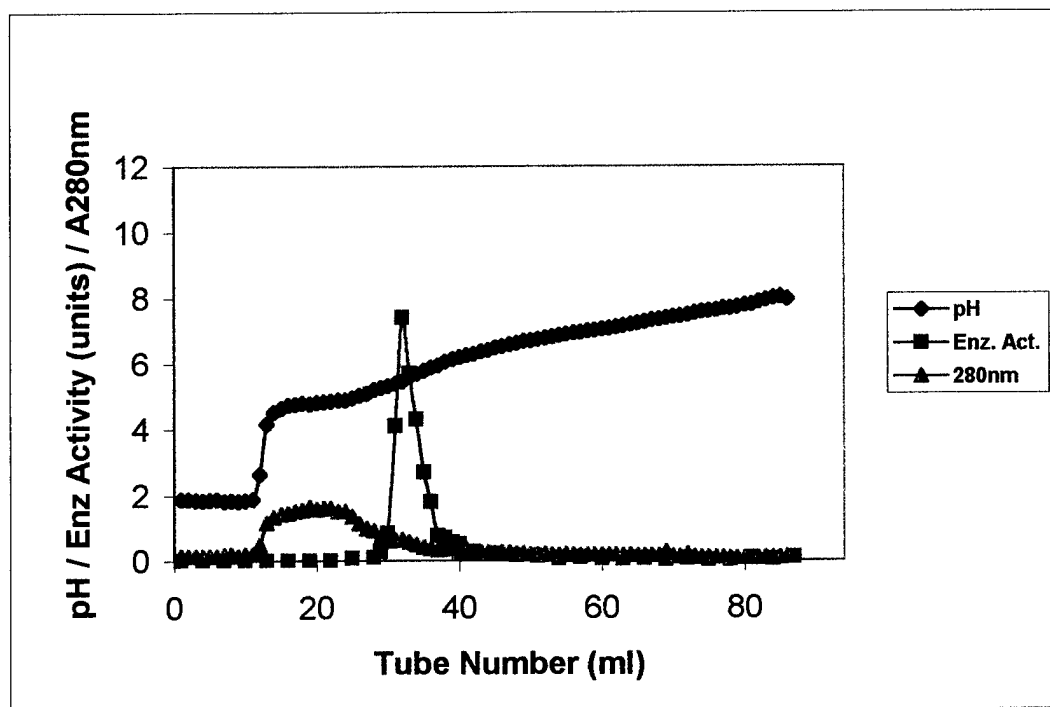


Figure 3a: Preparative Electrofocusing Chromatogram

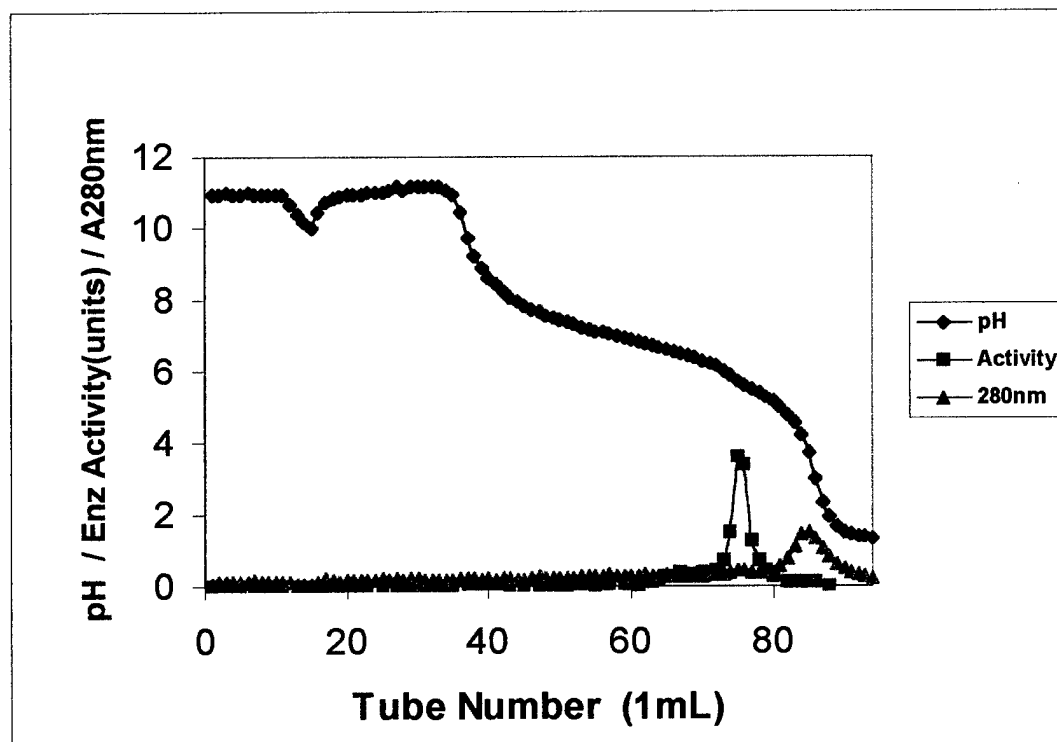
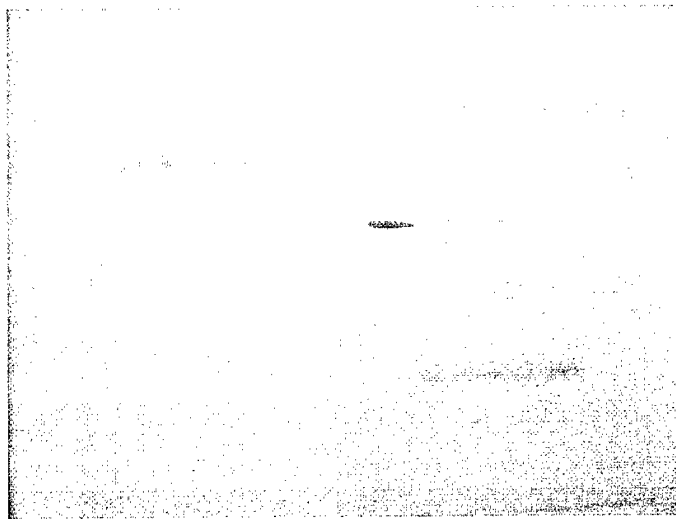
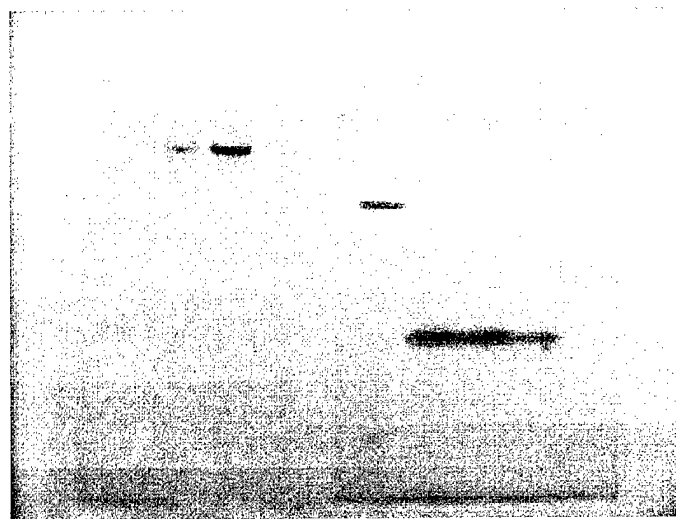


Figure 3b: Preparative Electrofocusing Chromatogram



1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Figure 3c: Nondenaturing Page Gel electrophoresis of fractions from figure 3a. Lanes 1-3; Zymogram showing enzyme activity from peak fractions 31,32,33. Lane 4; albumin standard, Lanes 5-6; Coomassie blue staining of peak fractions 31,32,33.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Figure 3d: Nondenaturing Page Gel electrophoresis of fractions from figure 3b. Lanes 1-3; Zymogram showing enzyme activity from peak fractions 74,75,76. Lane 4; albumin standard, Lanes 5-6; Coomassie blue staining of peak fractions 74,75,76.

Table I summarizes the effects of physostigmine and soman on the recombinant human liver carboxylesterase produced from cDNA in human 293T cells. The data show a lack of inhibition by the general esterase inhibitor, physostigmine. The enzyme was about almost completely inhibited the carboxylesterase inhibitor, soman, and the inhibited recombinant enzyme was reactivated to greater than 90% activity by the oxime, diacetylmonoxime.

Table 1: Inhibition and reactivation of recombinant Carboxylesterase

| Carboxylesterase Activity (% of Control) ^a | |
|---|-------------------|
| <u>Treatment</u> | <u>293T cells</u> |
| Physostigmine ^b | 96+/-2 |
| Soman ^c | 8+/-4 |
| Oxime ^d | 91+/-4 |

^a Activities (means +/- std. err.) are expressed relative to untreated extracts.

^b Incubation with 10 μ M physostigmine for 30 minutes at 25°C (pH 7.4).

^c Incubation with 1 μ M soman for 30 minutes at 25°C (pH 7.4).

^d Incubation of soman-inhibited carboxylesterase with 1 mM diacetylmonoxime for two hours at 25°C (pH 7.4).

Reportable Outcomes:

Manuscript, abstract, and presentation

Conclusion:

Clones containing the secretory form of human liver carboxylesterase were used to establish culture conditions where the enzyme is produced maximally in the 293T human cell line. This objective was accomplished by growing cells in a chemostat where the cells are maintained in a constant exponential phase of growth. In addition, conditions were defined which allow for an optimal time of removal of the culture media for isolation of carboxylesterase. Enzyme was isolated from the culture media, and the initial steps of enzyme purification using ammonium sulfate precipitation, HIC chromatography, anti-bovine BSA IgG chromatography, and preparative liquid isoelectric focusing were accomplished. It was observed that anti-bovine BSA IgG

chromatography removed greater than 90 % of the contaminating protein, but resulted in a loss of enzyme and was not effective in removing minor contaminants from the cell culture media. The use of preparative liquid electrofocusing columns, however, was found to be efficient and resulted in a preparation that was free of bovine serum albumin and other minor contaminants as measure by polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis.

A major goal of this study was to produce a recombinant carboxylesterase that has the potential for use as an antidote against the action of soman and other toxic organophosphorus agents. For this purpose it was important that the recombinant enzyme, unlike the cholinesterases, possess a relatively specific esterase activity and that the recombinant enzyme be regenerable by oxime agents. In this regard, carboxylesterase can be differentiated from cholinesterase [20] by the inability of carbamates to inhibit carboxylesterase at concentrations that readily inhibit cholinesterase [23]. Additionally, carboxylesterase can be differentiated by its ability to be reactivated by oximes after inhibition by organophosphorus compounds; cholinesterase cannot be reactivated after inhibition by organophosphorus compounds. Physostigmine is the carbamate most commonly used to differentiate carboxylesterase from cholinesterase [22] and soman is the organophosphorus compound that has the greatest difference in oxime reactivation to differentiate inhibition of carboxylesterase and cholinesterase [23]. Thus, our findings show that the recombinant cDNA of human liver carboxylesterase codes for an enzyme that is processed in the Golgi to produce an active form of the enzyme in human cells. Most importantly, the recombinant carboxylesterase is not inhibited by physostigmine and it is almost completely regenerable by an oxime.

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